



CA DEPARTMENT  
OF EDUCATION  
STATE  
SPECIAL SCHOOLS

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# Braille Bites California School for the Blind

VOLUME 8, EDITION 1

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## Superintendent's Message

By: Sharon Sacks

This edition of *Braille Bites* demonstrates the enthusiasm and excitement of our staff and students. As a school, we have been extremely active and involved in a myriad of activities. Our athletic teams shined when our Goal Ball team competed in Colorado, and our Karate team received numerous medals in a Bay Area competition. Our residential programs started the year with a great Welcome Back Dance, and students showed their costume creativity in a fabulous Halloween Dance & costume Party.

**CSB's** school and Short Course Programs are engaged in exciting experiential learning activities. Younger students visited a farm and learned about animal care and farm management. Our first short course of the year was the Ultimate Google Experience. Ten students from local school districts throughout California came to CSB for a week to learn "Google Education". The high point of the week, as you will read, was visiting Google Headquarters.

Our school is dedicated to school improvement. We are preparing for a visit from the Western Association of Schools & Colleges (WASC) in early spring. In preparation, the staff is gathering documents that describe and define our school's mission & purpose. The purpose of accreditation is program improvement. We know we have a good



program, but as professionals and families, we want to achieve excellence in how we provide services to our students on campus and throughout the state.

Finally, please welcome **CSB's** new staff members. They are a great addition to our **CSB** community. Their skills & expertise will add to the strength of our school.



## Look Who's New!!!!



**Peggy  
Atwell**  
Personnel Director



**Mark  
Zhao**  
IT Services



**Michelle  
Gutierrez**  
Teacher



**Chris  
Van Luvanee**  
Personnel Specialist



**Amy  
Jine**  
Reader



**Amanda  
McKerracher**  
Psychologist

## A visit to the farm!!

By: Student, Melanie V.

On September 20, 2016 we all went to Karen's farm. Our classes drove in 2 vans all the way to Stockton. We couldn't wait to get there!

When we arrived there, we met Ben the Turkey. He was a very tame turkey. Then we got to meet some goats. It was really fun feeding them grain and alfalfa! We went to meet more animals at the farm.

For example, there were some pigs. They loved to eat watermelon. We also saw some rabbits and ducks. Karen even had a blind cat; it was pretty shy. We had lunch outside under some trees. It was fun! Karen made some salads and some cookies just for us.

All in all, it was a fantastic day!



## WASC update

By: Gina Ouellette

**CSB** is currently in the process of pursuing accreditation from the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC) as a Supplementary Educational Program (SEP). This is a huge undertaking that involves conducting a critical self-evaluation of existing programs, services, policies, procedures, governance, and facilities at **CSB**. This analysis is submitted to WASC, along with supporting evidence in the form of data, manuals, plans, handbooks, etc. Once WASC receives and reviews the document, they schedule a one- to two-day Initial Visit by an independent committee composed of educators outside of **CSB** who have received specific training from WASC. After the Initial Visit, the WASC Visiting Committee will provide **CSB** with an assessment report which will include their summary of observed strengths as well as a list of specific recommendations.

We have been working on the WASC self-evaluation document for the last year. While this has been a lengthy undertaking, it has also proven to be invaluable, as it has provided us with the structure and tools to take a critical look at all aspects of **CSB**. We are emerging from this process with a clearer picture of the many strengths of our programs and services, as well as areas for potential growth and improvement.

After much hard work, we are excited to announce that the WASC self-review is nearing completion. Our goal is to have the document submitted to WASC officials by December 2016, and to have a WASC visit in February or March of 2017. Based on our analysis of **CSB** programs, we are optimistic that the WASC Visiting Committee will recommend candidacy for Initial Accreditation Status. Once **CSB** has been granted accreditation status, **CSB** will complete another comprehensive self-study report and implement the agreed-upon School Improvement Plan, submitting progress reports to WASC on a regular basis and undergoing additional site visits on a three- to six-year cycle.

## Goal Ball Tournament

By: Nadrina Weseman

The Goal Ball team at **C**alifornia **S**chool for the **B**lind participated in a Goal Ball tournament at the Colorado School for the Deaf and Blind. The team, which consisted of six students and two staff, traveled to Denver Colorado on September 30. They drove from Denver to Colorado Springs and spent two nights in the dorms at CSDB.

The tournament, which was part of CSDB's homecoming celebration, was held on October 1, 2016. The **CSB** team competed against CSDB and the New Mexico School for the Blind. The **CSB** team won one game against Colorado and one against New Mexico. Two of the students received MVP medals for their performance during the game. The students were also able to participate in the homecoming dance Saturday night after the game.

The students were also able to spend time in Denver. On Sunday, October 2, the students and staff went to an amusement park in Denver. They enjoyed a fun filled day of roller coasters and various other rides. After the amusement park the students spent the night in a hotel in Denver. At the hotel they enjoyed time in the pool and the Jacuzzi, they also had a delicious meal in the hotel café. On Monday, we went to the mall to look for souvenirs, we had a delicious late lunch at a local restaurant and we flew home. The students and staff had a fun filled time while at the Goal Ball tournament.



## White Cane Day 2016

By: Kylie Breuer

White Cane Day 2016 was a huge success! On October 13<sup>th</sup>, visitors from the Hatlen Center for the Blind as well as students from several school districts (including 10 students participating in **CSB**'s Google Short Course) joined **CSB** to celebrate. The day started with a bang when the school poured into the gym to participate in the Art Extravaganza. Give a shout-out to Minda Tayam for putting on this fabulous event! Students decorated their canes and then walked the runway to show-off their canes in a cane fashion show! Then, students from Hatlen Center gave a wonderful presentation about the history of White Cane Day and shared personal experiences about becoming comfortable with their visual impairment and using a cane.

Competition got fierce during the Amazing **CSB** Race, put on by Shelby Zimmerman and Tamar Solomon. Teams journeyed around the school, completing activities and solving clues to find their next destination. Everyone gathered at the finish line for a dance party. Congratulations to Team Durskinator (Ms. Durski's class) for finishing the Race first, Team Dream Team (Ms. Thanh's class) for the best teamwork and sportsmanship, and Team November (Ms. Vanessa's class) for using the best O&M skills!

A special BBQ lunch was served outside, and students enjoyed their

lunches (and the weather!) while sitting around Town Square. After lunch, the entire school loaded onto 2 yellow school busses ! and headed to Lake Elizabeth for the Walk-Run-Stroll-A-Thon, put on by the O&M Department. Some students zipped around the course trying to complete more laps than last year, while others walked with friends and socialized.

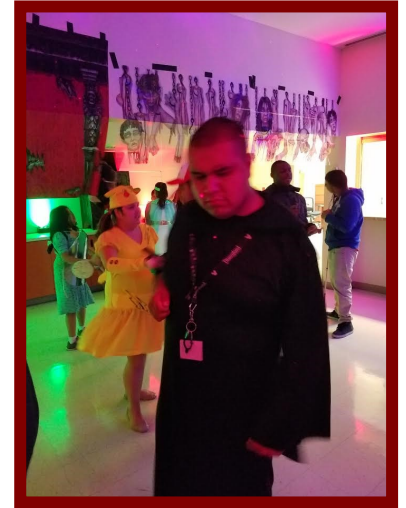
Thank you to everyone who helped make the entire day a wonderful success! We couldn't have done it without your support.



## Halloween Dance



On Thursday, October 27, 2016 Westridge dorm hosted a Halloween Dance in the Rec Center.



Treats, not tricks, were offered to the students. The students danced the night away and participated in a costume contest. Miriam S., Antonio S. and Gaby L-R., all won awards for their costumes.

A good time was had by all.

## Karate Tournament

By: Anthony Daniels

Please congratulate our amazing **CSB** Karate Team who competed this past October at both Destiny Arts Center in Oakland and River Valley High School in Yuba City.

Miriam S.  
Marissa T.  
Michael G.  
Travis N.  
Hector D.  
Felix B.  
Emmanuel O.  
Clayton S.

All students medaled in multiple divisions.



Also, please congratulate the Coaching Staff: Anthony Daniels, Jason Tucker, and Coach Jami Ordenana.

## A Google Experience!

By: Yurika Vu

On October 10-14<sup>th</sup>, the CSB Technology team offered “The Ultimate Google Experience” to 10 off campus students who are blind and visually impaired. During the week, they learned about Google Drive, Gmail, Classroom, Docs and how to access these applications with JAWS.

These students were also able to participate in **CSB's** White Cane Day festivities as well as art and APE. However, all of the short course kids reported that the highlight of



the week was the field trip to Google Headquarters in Mountain View. At Google, they were able to meet with members of the accessibility team and ask various questions. They also met with a robot named Meccanoid who was able to listen to a variety of voice commands, danced hip hop, and gave high fives! Lastly, these students participated in an accessibility research study which included playing a fun coding game. It was a jam packed day at Google, oh and of course - they were treated to a delicious Google lunch!

Here are some of the students' “Thank You” notes to the Google staff.

## A Google Experience (continued)

Dear Google,

I would like to thank you for letting us learn about Google by letting us visit Google. I liked very much and one part of Google I liked was the robot. My visit made me consider having a technology related job. I would also like to thank the people of Google for letting us work on a top secret game.

Sincerely,

Rocco

Dear Google,

Thank you for showing us about Google I thought it was a cool experience and I want to thank you for teaching that there is more to Google than I thought. Thank you Google.

Isaac



Dear Employees of Google,

Thank you. I had an amazing time at Google. I really appreciate the fact that everyone was so willing to answer all of my questions. I was so inspired when I found out that some of the employees are visually impaired. The products you displayed were fascinating and really caught my attention. Even the food was great, I felt as if I was being treated to a high class restaurant.

Thanks again,

Riley

Thank you so much for letting us go to Google and asking questions. I learned a lot and what you said will help me with my android device. I had fun testing your new products. I never thought I would go to Google. Thank you so much Google.

David

## A field trip to the Pumpkin Patch!



# Student Interview with Mr. Siligo

By: Student, Mary W.

**Mary: How long have you been working here?**



**Mr. Siligo:** I have been working here since 1980 when the school was first built.

**Mary: Have you had any other jobs before you came here?**

**Mr. Siligo:** Many jobs, I had a newspaper job when I was 14 years old. I had 2 jobs when I was a teenager at Oakland Tribune newspaper. They were delivering papers daily and in the evening. I signed up folks to take the paper at home.

**Mary: What was your job before you came here?**

**Mr. Siligo:** My job before I came here was teaching in my music studio and running our family restaurant. At my restaurants I did everything, even cooked in the kitchen when cooks couldn't come to work.

**Mary: What do you like about working here?**

**Mr. Siligo:** The students and great staff, I'm excited every morning to get here and teach.

**Mary: Where are you from?**

**Mr. Siligo:** I was born in southern California in a town called Brawley.

**Mary: What kind of instruments do you like to play?**

**Mr. Siligo:** I like to play many different instruments, but the guitar, piano, the saxophone, and ukulele are my favorites.

**Mary: What is your favorite instrument to play?**

**Mr. Siligo:** All styles of guitar.

**Mary: What is your favorite thing to teach here?**

**Mr. Siligo:** Music. I also like to teach Science and Awareness – Current Events.



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Twitter



<https://twitter.com/CSB94536>

## A quick note from Parents and Friends

By: Eric Chatham, PFA President

Can you believe how fast the year is going by? Students are packing up their Halloween costumes already and getting ready for the Holiday Season. It's been a busy start for the PFA (Parents and Friends Association) team supporting fundraising activities and preparing for this year's activities. **CSB** parents, friends and students manned concession stands at the Crazy Car Show, the PFA team served the teachers and staff at the "Welcome Back Breakfast", PFA provided funds to support the Halloween Dance, uniforms for the sports teams, White Cane Day, and various dorm and classroom activities.

Take a minute and stop by the Rocket Shop or the PFA table at the Winter Concert on December 14 & 15 and take a look at the new T-shirts and sweatshirts for the 2016/2017 school year. They've been selling fast and make great gifts for the holiday season, so cross off one of those items on your list with some **CSB** apparel.

We'd like to thank everyone that has donated time and money in support of **CSB**. Please reach out to any PFA member if you'd like to help with any of our upcoming activities. We can always use another set of hands at our events and are always looking for ways to provide an amazing experience for students and staff at **CSB**!



## Short Course program kicks off with Google!

By: Scott Smith

During the week of National White Cane Day, **CSB**'s tech team put on our first short course of the year, The Ultimate Google Experience. Ten students from around the state spent a week at **CSB** studying all things Google and how to access them with JAWS screen readers and refreshable braille.

A highlight of the week was visiting the festive Google campus. People rode past us on Google theme colored bikes. A life size t-rex skeleton loomed over an outdoor patio. Rumors circulated that the driverless Google car was passing nearby.

During our visit, we met with the Google Accessibility Team. Three of the four Accessibility Team members were blind and visually impaired. One of our students said excitedly afterward, "One of them was just like me [their vision] and one was just like my friend." The team sat with our students for an hour and half, until everyone had exhausted their questions. They asked the students about the technology they use and what they thought of the products. One student said later in amazement, "they asked *us* how to make improvements." Another student recalled, "The open question session started some wheels turning for me. It made me think I could get a job in tech."

For more information on our Short Course program,  
please visit our website at:

[www.csb-cde.ca.gov](http://www.csb-cde.ca.gov)

or call James Rudder at 510-794-3800 x.250  
or Scott Smith at 510-794-3800 x223

## WHAT'S COMING UP AT CSB?

**November:** 21st - 25th - Thanksgiving Break

**December:** 14th - Winter Concert Matinee 1:30 pm

15th - Winter Concert 7:30 pm

23rd - January 6th - Winter Break

**January:** 16th - Martin Luther King Jr Holiday

25th - Winter Ball



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